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ABSTRACT

Written by parents and intended for fellow parents of severely/multiply handicapped children, the booklet describes a series of awareness activities to enhance children's sensory experiences. Each section includes a brief rationale, background information, and a list of suggested activities for developing the senses of touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight. Examples of ways in which sensory experiences can be incorporated into the child's day are cited. (CL)

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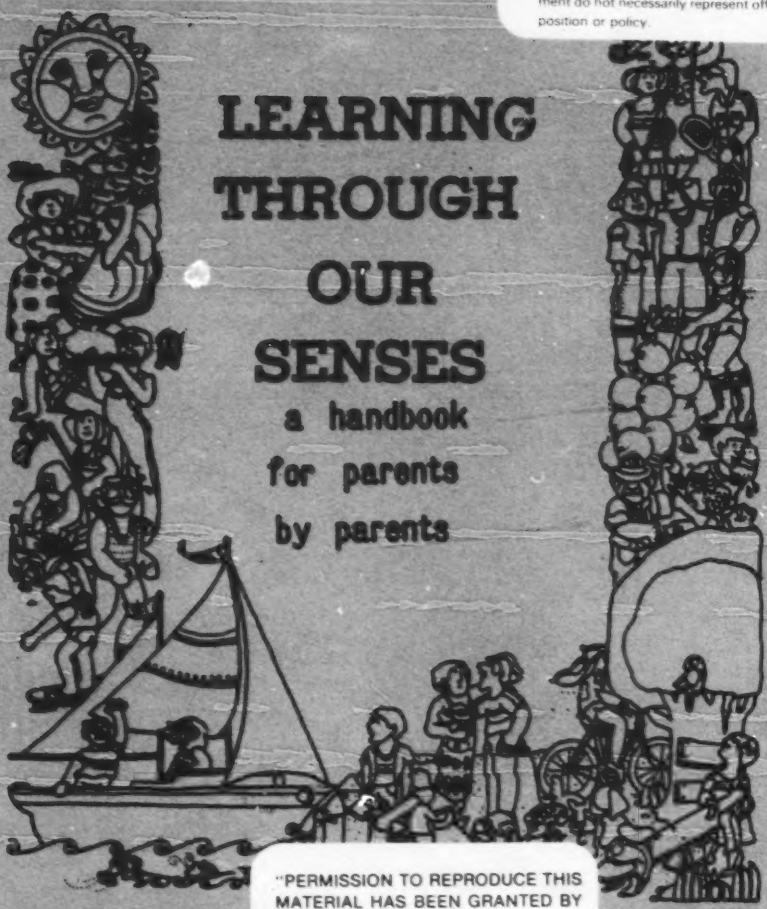
LEARNING THROUGH OUR SENSES

a handbook for parents by parents



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Edited by Mary-Dean Barringer and Wayne Buchgy, Title I
Created by the Tanny Parent Group

This booklet is dedicated to

Dr. Michael Eastman
Ms. Janice Stevens

who built the foundation

and to

Mr. Wayne Ruchgy

who keeps assisting us in
building our school of thought
for our children

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THE SENSE OF TOUCH

Awareness Activity: "How Does It Feel?"

This activity can be used to show your family what we learn through touch. Have a scarf ready (for a blindfold) and a bag filled with different textures. Some suggestions are: Sandpaper, sponge, powder puff, hand lotion, water spray, brush, terry cloth, etc.

When the person is blindfolded, pull out an item from the bag and rub it on the arm. Ask him/her to describe "how" it feels - not identify the item - but discuss the sensations the item produces. You will probably hear words like scratchy, soft, smooth, wet, oily, rough, etc.

"What Does Your Child Learn Through Touch"

Touch is the first sensation the infant experiences. He quickly moves from the warm environment of the mother's womb to the cold hospital room. He experiences being wet and dry. The infant touches with his entire body - from head to foot. He can soon distinquish the different textures of his bedding and clothing and the difference between mom's soft breast and dad's unshaven face.

A child learns about textures through touch. He also learns pressure, pain, pleasantness and temperature through touch. Although a child experiences touch through his entire body - he usually uses his fingers. The most sensitive spots are the wrist, the cheek and the inside fo the bottom of the foot.

ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN THROUGH TOUCH (TACTILE SENSE):

- Spray water (wet), rub skin gently with terrycloth (soft) until skin is dry.
- Take strips of sandpaper and cut out the letters of your child's name. Help her use her index finger and trace the letters while you are saying her name.
- Place a heating pad or hot water bottle on different parts of the body.
- Have your child feel the difference between wet and dry diapers.
- When dressing, choose clothes that have different textures: corduroy, velvet, wool, cotton, nylon, knits, etc.
- Rub wet and dry towels on arms and legs.
- Feel the difference between liquid and bar soap. Also, let your child hold a dry bar of soap in his hands. Add water and have him feel the slippery difference.

- Tickle different parts of the body with a feather duster. Name the body parts as you tickle them.
- Place a wet sponge in your child's hand to squeeze the water out of.
- Feel the sticky side of scotch tape.
- Let your child feel the bristles and teeth on a brush and comb. Help the child use those grooming articles to feel the sensation (pulling) of hair being combed/brushed.
- Put Elmer's glue on the outside of hand. When dry, pull off.
- Have your child smear Elmer's glue or white school paste before pasting paper.
- Ice cream and popsicles are fun ways to introduce "cold".
- Watermelon also provides a cold and "mushy" feeling.
- Fill balloons with water and/or sand for experience with weight and texture.
- Use a hairdryer with different speeds and temperature sittings (slow, fast, hot, cold).
- Smear menthol shaving cream on face, legs or underarms.
- Have various coins available for the child to feel different weight.
- When vacumning, allow the child to feel the vibration and the suction of the vacumn cleaner.
- When the dishwasher is going, place the child's hand on the door to feel the heat and the vibration.
- Make "Knox Blocks" - Use one package gelatin (Knox unflavored), one package small JELL-O and 1 cup water. You can cut the jell-o into squares to "build" with, or use cookie cutters to cut out different shapes.
- Rub an electric vibrator on various parts of the body.
- A natural sponge, called a "Luofha" gives different textures at both time.
- Have your child feel the different carpeting throughout the house. Also, fabric and carpeting stores often give away free samples of out-dated books.
- If you have access to a piano or other musical instruments have the child feel the vibration of the instrument. You can also place rubber bands over a show box for a similiar effect.
- Feel the vibrations of an electric toothbrush.
- Make a "Feel Board" or "Feel Box" using different pieces of materials such as terry cloth, silk, dotted swiss, velvet, corduroy, etc.
- Have different size paper bags for the child to feel and crumple.
- Feel the textures of peaches and strawberries before eating.
- Sprinkle powder on different body parts.
- Introduce a rose to your child. He can feel both the soft petals and the sharp thorn.

- Take an outdoor "Feel Walk". Feel the grass, dirt, tree bark, cement, bricks, cracks in sidewalks, brick top, etc.
- Provide opportunities to feel other peoples hair. White children enjoy the texture of black children's hair and vice versa.
- Let your child explore the iron frying pan for weight and texture. Then hand him a Teflon one to explore.
- Opening a drawer, then closing the drawer provides experiences in the sensations of pushing and pulling.

THE SENSE OF TASTE

Awareness Activity: "Mystery Food"

Place a variety of foods in brown paper lunch bags. Suggestions for your selection might include: hot mustard, banana, a jar of baby food, olive, lemon, peanut butter, carrot, slice of bologna. Have one family member select a brown bag. Blindfold them, open the bag and have them taste the contents. Ask them to describe what the item tastes like - (NOT TO GUESS WHAT IT IS) - but the sensations: sour, sweet, hard, soft, sticky, etc. Have the other family members describe the facial expression of the person tasting.

What Does Your Child Learn Through The Sense Of Taste?

The child learns his own likes and dislikes through taste. Some of the very first communication exchanges you will have with your child will be about taste. He may not be able to talk, but he will certainly communicate with open or closed lips, smiles or spitting back, flavors or mouth likes. Eventually he will learn what things he can eat or can't eat. He will also develop food preferences that will last his entire life. A child also learns about textures through taste. Again, always remember to talk about the taste experiences and label the sensations for your child. The easiest concepts to start with are "good" and "bad" followed by "sweet" and "sour". More difficult are the specific taste concepts that are associate with specific experiences (mushy, rubbery, sticky, bitter, salty, spicy, etc.).

ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN THROUGH THE SENSE OF TASTE:

- Pack fresh snow into a dixie cup. Let your child pour fruit flavore gelatin (the dry powder on the snow). Eat the mixture with a spoon or straw.
- Experience different textures in eating: banana (soft) and celery (hard), hard candy and marshmellow (hard and soft); cooked noodles and pretzels (hard and soft).
- Taste a slice of lemon and a slice of orange (sweet vs. sour).
- Expose your child to different meats that have different textures. Examples are liver, pork, chicken, beef and fish.
- "Watch it wiggle, see it squiggle" - who doesn't like to experience JELL-O?
- Put out a variety of condiments for your child to try at the next family hotdog meal. Examples are mustard, ketchup, barbecue sauce, chopped onions, pickle relish.
- Cut up a variety of cheeses in cubes. Choose cheeses that look alike (yellow) but taste different such as cheddar, colby, american, peneonning, etc. Great activity for finger feeders.

- Provide tasting experiences in raw vs. cooked vegtables. Examples to use are:

raw vs.	cooked
* *	* * * green beans
* *	* * * carrots
* *	* * * apples
* *	* * * noodles or rice
* *	* * * peas

- Taste cold cereal and hot cereal.
- Toothpastes provide different tastes. You child might prefer one over the other.
- Have your child use mouthwash. Again, introduce several and see if there is a preference for one.
- Sucking on different types of material provide different taste sensations.
- Different types of breads produce different taste. Cut breads into finger food size and let your child experiment. You can use white, cornbread, rye, pumpernikel, onion and wheat.
- Make a fruit salad and let your child experience different fruit tastes. Cut into pieces small enough for finger feeding. Fruits you can include are: orange slices, apple slices, grapes, banana slices, peaches, strawberries and melo pieces.
- Mint leaves and sweet clover are fun to suck on (Remember when you were a kid?).
- Taste different flavors of pudding.
- You can purchase cotton candy at K-Marts. It has a sweet taste and unique texture and kids love it!
- Provide a variety of hot vs. cold drinks. Examples are tea, coffee, coaco, apple cider, and milk.
- Have a potato day. Sample mashed potatoes, french fried and baked potatoes.
- Have corn day. Sample creamed corn, corn kernels, popcorn, corn on the cob and corn relish.
- Experience cold tastes with ice cream, popsicles and flavored ice cubes.
- Have different "crunchy" foods for your child to snack on: potator chips, cheese curls, pretzels and toast.
- Taste fresh cucumbers.
- Make nice cold summer soup called "Gazpocho". The recipe is in any cookbook. Basically - it is a blend of cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, green peppers and oil. It's a great way to introduce fresh vegtables to children who have great difficulty chewing.
- Give your child a different glass of juice each day. Suggestions are cranberry, orange, lime lemonade, grape, tomato and apple.
- Taste eggs cooked different ways: solid, scrambled, fried and poached.
- Licking stamps and envelopes have a very distinct taste. Let your child experience this.
- Have your child taste different, yet common spices such as sugar, salt, pepper, and garlic.

- Have a sample of different salad dressings on a plate. Let your child taste each one and see if he has a preference.
- Taste different food flavorings such as vanilla, almond, rum, etc.
- Let your child taste snow during winter.
- Give your child a small piece of gum to chew. He may swallor it, but that's okay!
- Be aware of the responses your child may have to medicine and flourish from medical experiences. He may associate the taste with the experience.

THE SENSE OF SMELL

Awareness Activity: "Oh, What an Odor!"

Purchase "scratch and sniff" stickers from your local Hallmark store. Stick one sticker on an index card. Have a family member close her eyes, sniff the sticker and identify the scent. Continue until all the stickers are used up.

"What Does Your Child Learn Through the Sense of Smell?"

Your child learns discrimination skills through smell. Initially, he will classify smells into things he likes and things he does not like. Children can learn that certain smells indicate "bad" and certain smells indicate "good". Your child may learn that smells are also a warning of danger.

ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN THROUGH THE SENSE OF SMELL:

- Burn incense at home.
- Make a "scratch and sniff" braid from smell stickers purchased in Hallmark stores.
- Spray air freshener or perfume about five feet from your child. See how long it takes for the smell to reach his nose.
- Bring in cut flowers to smell. Place some by your child's bed.
- Use perfumed soap at bath time.
- When your child has perspired, or smells "bad", point out the smell to him. ("This smells bad, you need to wash")
- Provide different colognes or perfumes for your child to try.
- When you are cooking, see how long it takes your child to find his way into the kitchen. This shows he is beginning to associate the smells of the kitchen with the meaning that something pleasant is about to happen.
- Point out the smells of new things: clothes, shoes, cars.
- The new sugarless chewing gum provides different smells.
- See if the different smells of toothpastes will entice your child to use one over the other.
- Money has specific smells: a crisp new dollar, pennies, other coins.
- Urine, feces and vomit are smells that indicate something needs to happen! For example - the smell of urine and feces in clothing indicates that clothing must be changed. Help your child try to associate these smells with the bathroom area.

- There are many common household products that have distinct smells that we do not want our children to use. Introduce these smells with the word "NO" and place a "MR. YUK" sticker on the container . Some substances to identify are: gasoline, oil, ammonia, medicines, mothballs, nail polish, nail polish remover, household cleaning supplies, cigarettes, cigars, bug spray, paint.
- Use different shampoos that have scents.
- Take a walk after a rain and smell all the nature smells or take a walk by a lake.
- Let your child smell the spices in the spice rack.
- Let your child smell dirt socks and clothing. Tell him when they smell like this - they go in the dirty clothes bag.
- Take a walk through the Greenhouse at Belle Isle or the Ape House at the Detroit Zoo (animal smells)
- Let your child smell garbage or spoiled foods and introduce this as a bad smell.
- Make a different package of Kool-Aid every day for a variety of smells.
- Let your child smell (and taste) different food flavoring (almond, vanilla, rum, etc.).
- Place several different food items out on the table. Blindfold your child and let him pick the one he wants according to the smell.
- Point out the smells of the items you use with your child: Ben Gay, Vick's, powders, baby lotion.
- Smell the freshly cut lawn.
- Buy perfume crystals for the house.
- Take a walk by a driveway that has just been tarred.

THE SENSE OF HEARING

Awareness Activity: "It Makes Me Feel Like Dancing."

Sounds and music are a part of everyone's environment. Here are two activities that will help you and your family become aware of what we learn through sounds.

#1.) Have everyone close their eyes while you perform a series of sounds. After every sounds, ask the persons what they heard and what it meant. Examples to use can include coughing, knocking, crumbiing paper, a phone ringing, etc.

#2.) Get a selection of music that ranges from very upbeat (Celebration by Kool and the Gang) to very mellow (Billie Holiday - Blues). Play the music and ask family members how they feel listening to the specific songs.

What Does Your Child Learn Through the Sense of Sound?

Children learn that sounds communicate. Your child will learn that specific sounds are associated with different events. At some point, he may learn that some sounds mean danger (screams, horns, scrushing tires) and that some sounds help us (alarm clock, telephone, doorbell, buzzer on the stove).

We communicate with sounds. Even before speech develops, we can communicate hunger, pleasure, pain, anger and other feelings through sounds of crying, screaming and laughter.

Listening to music, and other sounds can evoke special emotional reactions. Children who only hear "MUZAK" in a doctor's office may become very agitated if they suddenly hear it in another environment. At the same time, a special song may remind them of a very pleasant event.

ACTIVITIES TO HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN THROUGH THE SENSE OF SOUND:

- Call your child's name from different parts of the room. Get really excited when he looks in your direction.
- Have different objects that make noise for your child to use (bells on a string, odds and ends thrown in an empty coffee can, etc.) This teaches your child that he has the ability to make sounds.

- Always label the different sounds that occur in the house. For example, the ring of the telephone ("Phone's ringing"), the honk of a car horn ("Thomas is here - the car horn burped"), knock at the door ("Somebody's at the front door"). Other examples are:

  -running water ("Bath Time")

  -barking dog ("I hear Corky")

  -school bus horn ("Time to go to school")

  -sounds of cooking: frying, moving pots and pans around, electric mixer ("I'm making something to eat")

  -play outside sounds ("The kids are playing and having fun")

  -lawnmower ("Mr. Jones is cutting the grass")

  -vacuum cleaner ("I'm vacuuming our dirty floor")

  -key in lock ("Marie's home")

  -car in driveway ("We are getting ready to go to Grandma's" or "Bob's here")

  -stomach growling ("Sounds like you're hungry")

  -silence ("Listen to how quiet it is")

  -roar of an airplane ("Look, it's a plane")

  -sirens ("The police/firemen are going to help someone")

  -ticking of a clock ("Listen to the Clock")

-There are many sounds during a storm that can be frightening to children if they are not reassured as to what they are. During a storm sit close to your child and talk to him about the sounds of thunder, lightning, rain hitting the windows, wind blowing, etc.

-Listen to all the animal sounds outside: cats meowing, dogs barking, birds chirping, crickets chirping, etc.

-There are many transportation sounds in the Detroit area to introduce your child to: trains (Amtrak station or nearby railroad tracks), boats (Detroit River), planes, cars, city buses.

-Point out the sounds of some of the community workers in your neighborhood: the sound of the garbage trucks, the sounds of mail being placed in the mailbox, the sound of the bell on the ice cream truck.

-Have your child listen to the "laundry" sounds of the washer and the dryer. See if he can indicate to you when the sound stops.

-Place chimes by a window or door.

-Listen to all the sounds at dinnertime: silverware clinking on plates, chewing food, drinking sounds, etc.

-Take your child to the fireworks.

-Have your child place a coin in a vending machine and push the button. Not only is it a good example of sound, but it is also a good lesson in cause and effect.
-Sing to your child.
-Listen to the different sounds of feet: squeeky new shoes, running, walking, stomping feet, etc.
-Point out that the sounds of clippers and scissors mean you are going to cut something.
-Be aware of all the voice tones you use with your child (anger, loud, soft, discipline, teasing, etc.)
-Have your child make sounds by clapping his hands and snapping his fingers.

THE SENSE OF SIGHT

Awareness Activity: "The Eyes Have It"

Ask one member of your family to close their eyes and describe another family member. Jot down the things they are saying. After the description is complete, review how much of the description is based on visual descriptors.

What does your child learn through the sense of sight?

Children learn about color, size and shape through sight. These skills will aid the child in learning sorting, matching, and discrimination tasks. Sight is also important in helping the child establish object permanency skills which helps build memory.

ACTIVITIES THAT WILL HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN THROUGH THE SENSE OF SIGHT:

-Put a goldfish bowl in a place that is near an area of the house where your child spends alot of time. (bedroom, bathroom). The darting and constant movement of the fish will provide visual stimulation.
-Tape large pieces of cellophane of different colors on the windows in your home.
-Hang mobiles in an area where your child has periods of time where he is either lying in a specific position or sitting. You can use colored twinkle lights, blinking lighted objects, mobiles, hanging toys or moving toys. The purpose of this activity is to enhance the development of vision through stimulation.
-Use a flashlight and have the child visually track the light.
-Hold out objects for the child to look at, reach for and touch.
-Turn lights off and on.
-When driving in the car or on the bus, point out objects for your child to look at.
-Blow up balloons for your child to focus on, track and hit at.
-Point out the airplane in the sky when it flies by.
-Take a trip to the zoo to look at animals.
-Visit the Detroit River and look at the boats.
-Visit Belle Isle to look at the Children's Zoo and the aquarium.
-Use mirrors to introduce your child body and fun play. The "Me Doll" is also fun to use for this.
-Provide wind-up toys for your child to follow with his eyes as it moves across the floor or table.
-Play a version of "Simon Says" so your child can imitate moving different body parts.
-Have different color and size hats for your child to try on. Show him his reflection in the mirror.
-Video and electronic games (such as Simon, Touch and Tell) are good for visual skills.
-Make scrapbooks of different pictures for your child to look at. (clothing, foods, action pictures)
-Look through photographs with your child and print out different family members.

-Watch fireworks
-Drive through neighborhoods at Christmas to look at lights.
-Have your child match do thing articles.
-Use an Etch-a-Sketch.
-Watch trees blowing in the wind.
-Place your child outdoors (if he is in a wheelchair) so he can watch other children playing.
-Watch T.V. (But not too much!)
-Put different posters in your child's room for him to look at.
-Point out different shapes in your house (round clock, square table)
-Watch different "action" equipment such as the sprinkler.

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Take a moment and think about all the many sensory experiences you encounter throughout the day. Taste the first sip of cold orange juice, smell the aroma of fresh coffee, feel the tingling of water on your skin during your shower, listen to music on your radio as you drive to work, and see the sun coming up and peeking through the clouds. So many of our daily activities involve sensory experiences.

Knowing this allows you to focus in on the experiences you can create for your child as you carry on the activities of daily living. Here are a few suggestions to get you thinking about the many ways you can use sensory activities in your child's life.

BATH TIME:

-Bathe with soap bubbles and blow off your child's skin.
-Rub softly with wet washcloth and dry with towel. (compare the difference in wet vs. dry terrycloth)
-Rub lotion or powder on skin.
-Paint lines and designs on body parts with soap paint. (available through AVON")
-Put a washrag puppet on child's hand and encourage movement.
-Splash water gently

DRESSING:

-Move clothes softly over skin and label the texture. "This is so soft" or "Doesn't this feel kind of rough?"
-Stress the motions of pulling and stretching.
-Play Peek-a-Boo with clothing articles.
-Play a disappearing game with some of the articles of clothing. Hide socks behind your back and say "Where did Debbie's socks go?'

MEALTIME:

-Place child in kitchen to smell food being prepared.
-Allow the child to taste what is being prepared.
-Point out different food textures (hard vs. soft)
-Have the child taste hot vs. cold foods.

AROUND THE HOUSE:

-Point out the different sounds to your child. See if they can find the direction of the sound by turning their head or by tracking. Sounds can be the radio, TV, doorbell or knock, vaccuum, phone ringing, car starting or driving by, a dog barking, etc.
-Spray airfreshner or perfume and see how long it takes to reach your child's nose.
-Move wheelchairs by the window so your child and watch the movement outdoors.

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SPECIFICALLY FOR THE SEVERELY MULTIPLY IMPAIRED CHILD

The child who has a variety of motoric impairments often spends a great deal of time in a prone position. These few ideas offer suggestions for programming when the child must spend some time alone:

1. Suspend a large beachball, balloon or other lightweight object over the area where the child is lying. Encourage them to track the object or attempt or kick at it or hit it.

2. A wedge such as this one by Tumble-Forms is a welcome addition to the motorically involved child's world. Placed in the position in the photograph, the child is allowed the use of his hands. The natural pull of gravity will help move the hands toward the sensory tub. This tub can be filled with a variety of tactile materials and should be changed often for variety. Suggestions include finding shells in sand. floating objects on water, finding large objects in oatmeal, rice, beans, finding plastic eggs in straw or shredded newspaper. The ideas are as endless as your imagination.

3. Have the child lie on a variety of different textures that you change every ten minutes. These can include a sheet that has been placed in the refridgerator, satin or silk, a furry piece of material, quilted, terry cloth, cordouroy, etc.

4. Hang mobiles about the child. This is a common idea, but change them everyday. Include chimes, mobiles that play music and textured ones.

5. Adhere different objects on the wall close to the floor so the child can roll to them or use when placed by them in a prone position. This can include a mirror, a busy box, different textures to feel like tile, carpet squares and cork.

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The "All By Myself" Box

There are many times throughout the day that the young child spends by himself. This idea came from the book "Games Children Play" and is an adaptation of the "Rainy Day Box". The objects that are listed are common toys and objects around the house that children like to explore. The idea is to place from five to ten objects in a box and allow the child to use them as he desires.

Suggested toys and objects are:

newspaper, foil, wrapping paper to rip and crumble

Coffee can container with lid (for filling and dumping)

clothespins (pinching and putting in container)

plastic bowl and wooden spoon

Textured puppet such as Cookie Monster, Oscar or Fozzie Bear

Balls: textured ball, spin and see ball, large beach ball

old purse or pouch that snaps, folds open

roll-on deoderant bottles filled with paint

assorted noisemakers (rattles, musical instruments to shake, squeeze toys)

Push and Go toys (available at Toys "R Us)

Busy Box

bulb toys (either Frisky Frog or Oscar the Grouch)

Pound-a-Round

Scratch and Sniff boards or books (home-made)

cardboard picture books or home-made ones out of photo albums

Textured blocks

windmill

hats, sunglasses, mittens and other appropriate dress-up clothes

beanbags

feel board (home-made of various textures such as sandpaper, fur, terry, etc)

feather duster

spray bottle with water in it

large mirror